Property Name: Oxford-Bellevue Ferry   Inventory Number: T-305

Address: The Strand and Morris Street (MD 333)   Historic district: ___ yes   X no

City: Oxford   Zip Code: County: Talbot

USGS Quadrangle(s):   Oxford

Property Owner: Commissioners of Oxford   Tax Account ID Number: 2103127117

Tax Map Parcel Number(s):   677   Tax Map Number: 400

Project: Ferry Wharf Rehabilitation   Agency: MD State Highway Administration

Agency Prepared By: SHA Architectural Historian

Preparer's Name: Anne E. Bruder   Date Prepared: 11/18/2004

Documentation is presented in: Project Review and Compliance Files

Preparer's Eligibility Recommendation: X   Eligibility recommended   ___ Eligibility not recommended

Criteria: X A   ___ B   ___ C   ___ D   Considerations: ___ A   ___ B   ___ C   ___ D   ___ E   ___ F   ___ G

Complete if the property is a contributing or non-contributing resource to a NR district/property:

Name of the District/Property: Oxford Historic District

Inventory Number: T-   Eligible: X yes   Listed: ___ yes

Site visit by MHT Staff   ___ yes   X no   Name: Date:

Description of Property and Justification: *(Please attach map and photo)*

The Oxford-Bellevue Ferry is believed to be the oldest free-running ferry in Maryland. A free-running ferry moves across the water without the aid of a cable between the two landing points. There are eight ferries remaining in state: Whitehaven Ferry and Upper Ferry over the Wicomico River in Wicomico County; Crisfield to Smith Island, Somerset County; Point Lookout to Smith Island, St. Mary's County; Reedville, VA to Smith Island, Somerset County; Crisfield, MD to Tangier Island, VA, Somerset County; and White's Ferry over the Potomac, Montgomery County. A 1638 or 1639 law established the first ferry in St. Mary's County across the St. George River. In 1658, the Assembly required every county except Kent to maintain a ferry and each was to be financed by local taxes. (Source: www.mdarchives.state.md.us/msa/mdmanual "Maryland Department of Transportation -- Origin" downloaded 11/23/2004).

In 1683, the Talbot County Circuit Court picked Richard Royston to run the ferry between Oxford and Bellevue. According to local and county histories, including the website maintained by the Oxford-Bellevue Ferry, the ferry landing has been in three locations along the banks of the Tred Avon River -- its present location since 1931, and prior to that further west along the bank at the end of Morris Street. The ferry boat's mode of power also has changed types over time -- through the years, people have used scull, sail, steam engines, and now diesel fueled engines. (Source: Oxford Treasures Then and Now, Douglas Hanks Jr. with the

MARYLAND HISTORICAL TRUST REVIEW

Eligibility recommended X   Eligibility not recommended ___

Criteria: X A   ___ B   ___ C   ___ D   Considerations: ___ A   ___ B   ___ C   ___ D   ___ E   ___ F   ___ G

MHT Comments: The ferry site contributes to the significance of the Oxford HD; the current wharf and boat are less than 50 yrs old and are not exceptionally significant

_____   11/29/04
Reviewer, Office of Preservation Services   Date

_____   11/29/04
Reviewer, National Register Program   Date

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Oxford Museum, Oxford, MD 1999) But the requirements of the ferry landing have remained the same -- a dock and some sort of transfer bridge that would connect the dock with the boat to enable passengers to move their vehicles, animals and themselves onto and off the boat.

During the late seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, several women ran the ferry, including Amy Jensen (1690s), Judith Bennett (1699-1720s), Catherine Bennett (1737) and Elizabeth Skinner (1750s) who used a scow powered by sculling. (Source: www.oxfordbellevueferry.com, downloaded 11/18/2004).

In 1963, the Maryland State Roads Commission (SRC) constructed the current ferry wharf. It consists of the wharf and ramp that extend from the Strand, the transfer bridge that connects the boat to the wharf, the hoist towers that raise and lower the bridge, as well as the bulkhead. The wharf and ramp are made of wood, while the transfer bridge is a steel grate. SHA has made several repairs over the years, most recently replacing the hoisting lift in 1997 or 1998. A photo from 1931 in "Oxford Treasures Then and Now" shows the ferry wharf with a wooden wharf, ramp, transfer bridge and hoist towers. This was the equipment the SRC replaced in 1963. The current boat, The Talbot, was constructed in 1980. The Blount Shipyard in Warren, Rhode Island built the steel ferryboat that holds up to nine cars.

Ferries have always served in areas where it was not possible to easily ford a body of water. Although there is more than 300 years of history of ferry service across the Tred Avon, the current equipment is less than fifty years of age -- the ferry wharf is 41 years old and the ferry boat is 24. Neither the equipment nor the boat meet the age requirements of the National Register of Historic Places. The ferry route has also changed over the years -- while it has always been in the vicinity of its current location on the south shore of the river, it has been moved according to the varying needs of the town and the ferry operator.

The town of Oxford is considered to be eligible for listing in the National Register of Historic Places district. Oxford was founded in 1683 and has a 300 year history as a port town and a fishing and canning center. It retains many historic buildings representing the eighteenth, nineteenth and twentieth centuries, especially along the Strand and Morris Street. The town also retains commercial and civic structures as well as a working marina from the same time period. The Town of Oxford has recognized a local district that extends from Pleasant Street north to the Strand and includes the buildings from the western shore of Town Creek to the eastern shore of the Tred Avon, the area of nineteenth century Oxford. The Oxford-Bellevue Ferry is an integral part of the town and its history. SHA has therefore determined that while it is not individually eligible for inclusion in the National Register of Historic Places, but it is eligible under Criterion A as a contributing resource to the Oxford Historic District. Although the names of the many people who have run the ferry are known, no single individual has gained prominence while running the ferry and it is therefore not eligible under Criterion B. The ferry dock and transfer bridge are less than fifty years of age and do not demonstrate unique qualities that would make it eligible under Criterion C. It also does not meet the requirements of Criteria Consideration G: Properties That Have Achieved Significance Within The Last Fifty Years. Because of the nature of the ferry, its materials including the wharf, the dock and the boat, are exposed to every extreme of weather. As a result, it is difficult to extend the life of the resource beyond a fifty year period. Criterion D was not investigated as part of this study.

MARYLAND HISTORICAL TRUST REVIEW

Eligibility recommended _____   **Eligibility not recommended** _____

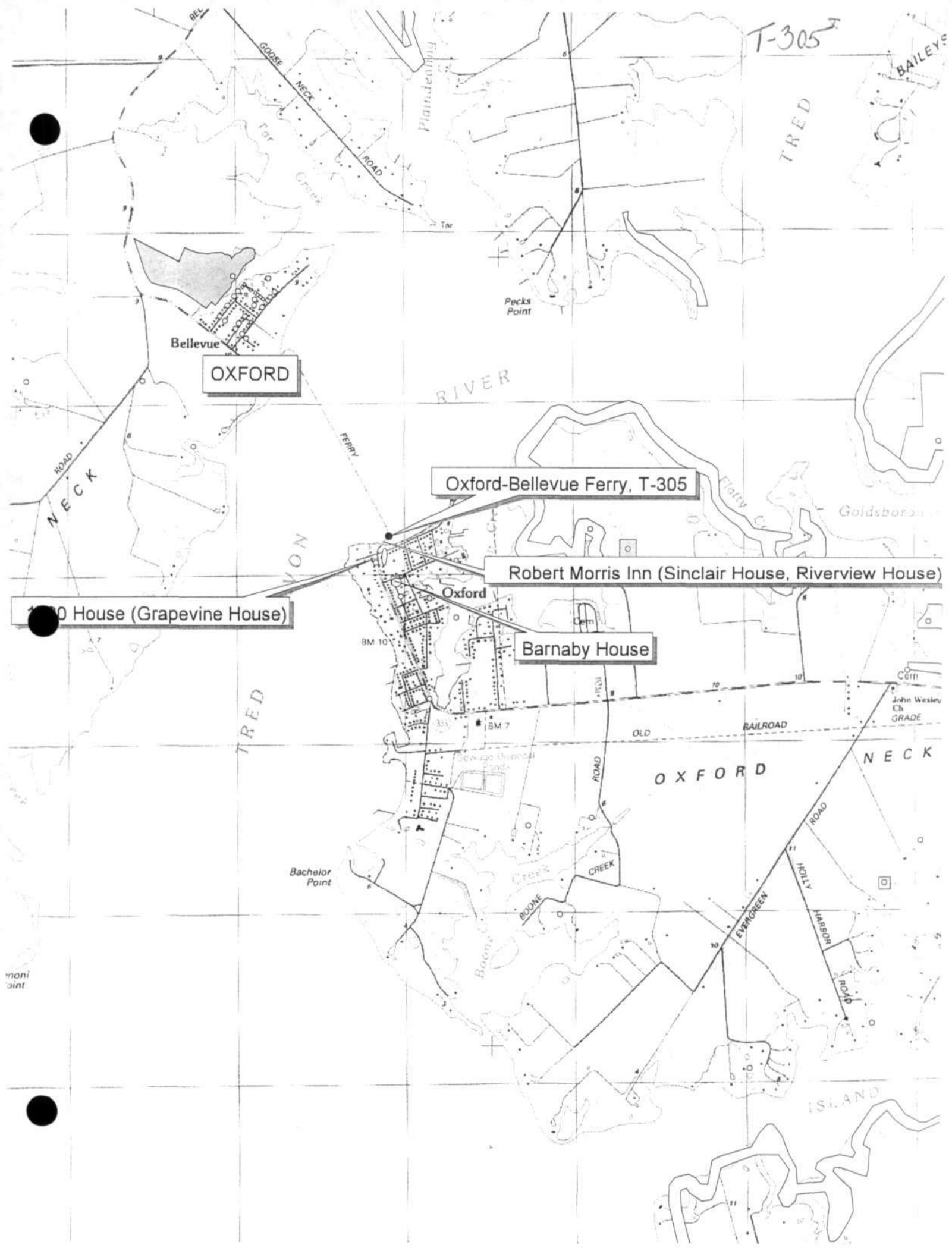**Criteria:** ___ A ___ B ___ C ___ D   **Considerations:** ___ A ___ B ___ C ___ D ___ E ___ F ___ G

MHT Comments:

_____   _____
Reviewer, Office of Preservation Services   **Date**

_____   _____
Reviewer, National Register Program   **Date**

T-305

OXFORD

Bellevue

OXFORD

Oxford-Bellevue Ferry, T-305

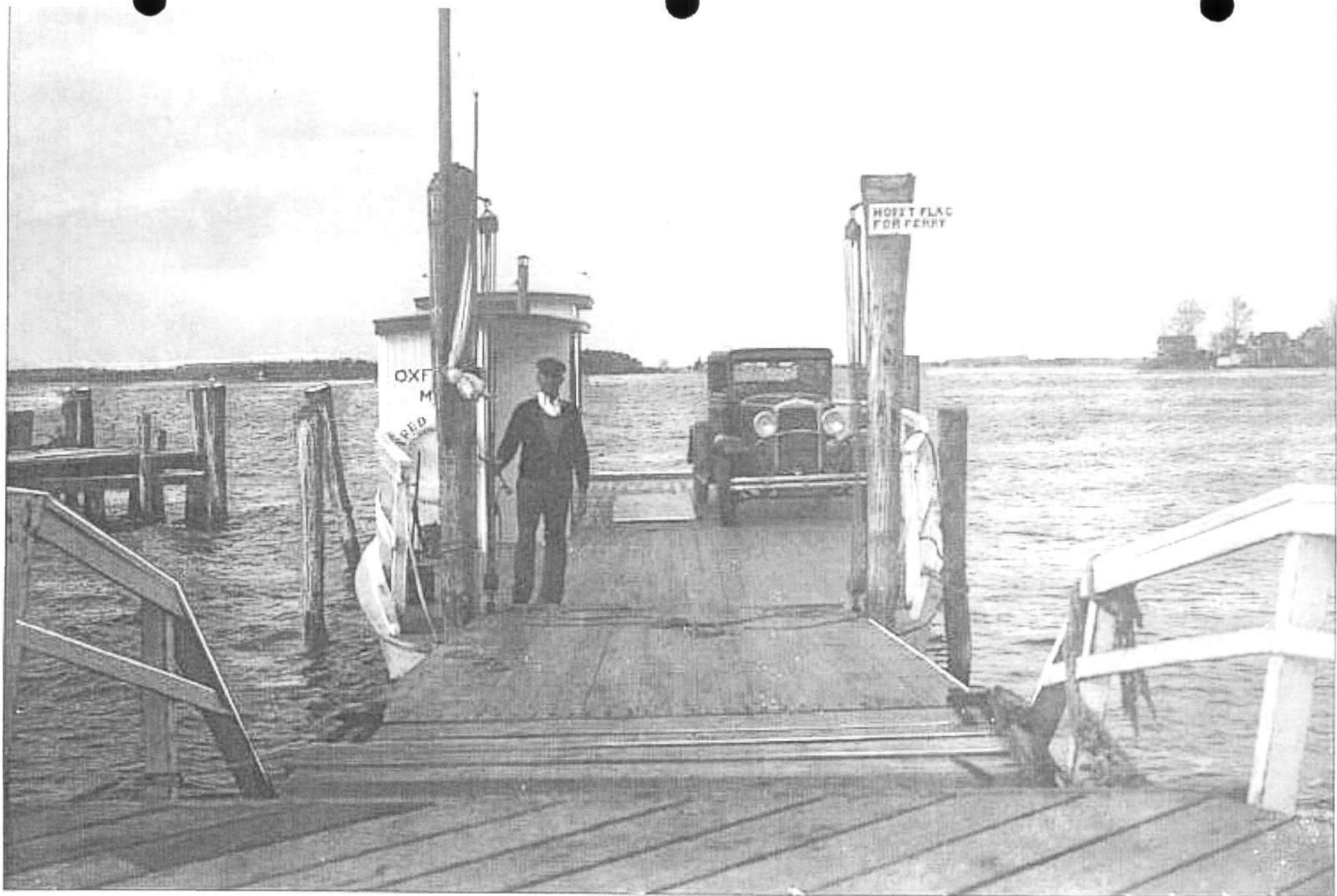Robert Morris Inn (Sinclair House, Riverview House)

1800 House (Grapevine House)

Oxford

Barnaby House

Circa 1931 - From the collection of Douglas Hanks. Jr.

RESTRICTED BRIDGE

SINGLE UNIT
42,000 LBS GVW

COMBINATION UNIT
52,000 LBS GCW

OXFORD BELLEVUE FERRY
SUMMER SCHEDULE: JUNE 1ST TO AUG 3
DAILY 9AM TO 9PM
SAT AND SUN 9AM-9PM
WINTER SCHEDULE: SEPT 1 TO JUNE 1?
DAILY 9AM TO SUNSET
SAT AND SUN 9AM TO SUNSET
CLOSED DEC 1-MARCH

F-305

Oxford-Bellevue Ferry
Talbot Co., MD
Bellevue
Nov. 2004

MDSHPO

Looking East at Ferry Wharf
y4 and Ferry, The Talbot

T-305.

Oxford - Bellevue Ferry
Talbot Co., MD.

Bruce

Nov. 2004

MD SHPO

THE TALBOT AT DOCK

2/4

T-205.

OXFORD-BELLEVUE FERRY
TALBOT CO., MD
BRIDGE
NOV. 2004
MD SHPO

TRANSFER BRIDGE AT WHARF

3/4

T-305

OXFORD - BELLEVUE Ferry

TALBOT Co. MD

PREVIEW

Nov. 2004

MD SHORE

Ferry WONDER SETTING
4/4

A ferry has been in operation between the towns of Oxford and Bellevue continually since 1683. In that year, the Talbot County court prevailed upon Richard Royston to run a ferry service at an annual subsidy of 2,500 pounds of tobacco. Power has been variously provided by sail, oar, steam, and diesel fuel, making this the oldest cableless ferry in the United States.
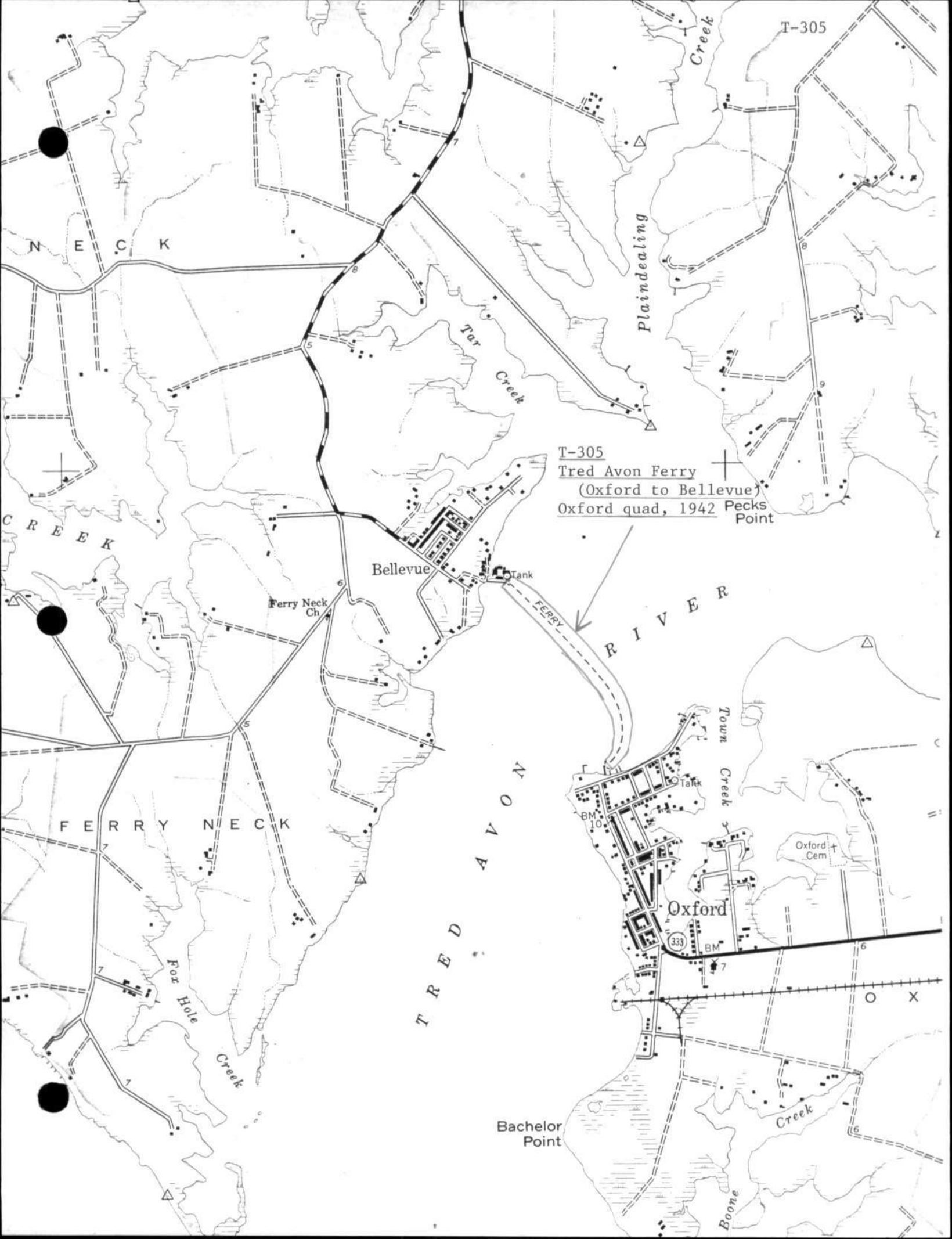
T-305

T-305
Tred Avon Ferry
(Oxford to Bellevue)
Oxford quad, 1942

Pecks
Point

Plaindealing Creek

N E C K

C R E E K

Tar Creek

Bellevue

Tank

Ferry Neck
Ch

F E R R Y   N E C K

FERRY

R I V E R

T R E D   A V O N

Fox Hole
Creek

Town Creek

Tank

BM
10

Oxford
Cem

Oxford

333

BM
7

O X

Bachelor
Point

Boone
Creek

T-305